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ABSTRACT

As part of San Diego City College's (SDCC's) involvement in the Urban Community College Transfer Opportunities Program, two surveys were conducted to accumulate data about the characteristics and experiences of SDCC students. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program American Freshman Survey was administered to 178 students to determine student characteristics, while the College Student Experience (CSE) Survey was used to measure the institutional environment from the students' perspective. Study findings, based on responses from 107 students who completed both surveys, included the following: (1) 60% of the respondents were 25 years old; 65% were women; and 45% were White, 23% Black, 19% Chicano, and 9% Asian; (2) 55% of the respondents attended a high school that was either completely or mostly White, and 51% lived in predominantly White neighborhoods; (3) 53% supported busing as a means of achieving school integration; (4) the academic preparation of the SDCC respondents was below the national average; (5) 41% received financial assistance through a Pell Grant; (6) 48% were working either full or part-time; (7) students rated their strongest gains in vocational training, career information, writing skills, self understanding, interpersonal skills, and self-motivation; (8) students identified their areas of least gain as understanding science and technology and computer knowledge; (9) the aspects of the college environment receiving the highest ratings were vocational education, students, personal relevance, and faculty; and (10) the environmental areas receiving the lowest rating were administrators, critical/evaluative instruction, and aesthetic/creative education. (EJV)

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SAN DIEGO CITY COLLEGE

FINAL RESEARCH REPORT ON THE
URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

funded by the Ford Foundation

Judy A. Stamm

Fall 1984

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOR-TRANS PROJECT

The research component of the UCCTOP (Urban Community College Transfer Opportunities Program) grant was conducted during the Spring 1984 semester. Two survey instruments were used, the Freshmen Survey, by Alexander W. Astin and the College Student Experiences Survey (CSE) by C. Robert Pace. The Freshmen Survey is designed to provide comprehensive data on student characteristics; the CSE survey provides information about the quality of student experiences relative to the institution.

The student profile which emerged from the San Diego City College pilot study is a woman over 24 years old who is either black or Mexican-American. She was a B- student in high school and lives in an apartment in a predominantly white neighborhood, less than ten miles from the college. Her annual income is low by almost any standard and she is concerned about financing college. She receives a Pell grant and works part time. She plans to continue her education and pursue a BA degree in business or data processing. She is most interested in college attendance so that she can get a better job and make more money.

The quality of the student experience at San Diego City College indicated the following gains. The strongest gains were in vocational training, information relevant to a career, writing clearly and effectively, understanding yourself, ability to get along with others. The weakest gains were in understanding science and technology.

The results of the CSE questionnaire indicated institutional strengths in vocational education and general education especially improved writing skills. Weak gains were made in science and technology.

A pilot group of 107 students responded to both surveys. The results provided the most comprehensive measures of our students and institution that have ever been available.

Ideally, this research component will be expanded district-wide and repeated each year for the next three years. This would provide us with longitudinal data on each institution in the district so that we could assess changes over time and predict future trends.

During the 1983-84 academic year, San Diego City College was one of twenty-four national recipients of a grant from the Ford Foundation. The grant program was called UCCTOP, Urban Community College Transfer Opportunities Program; its targeted cohort was urban community colleges with at least a 30% minority enrollment. The purpose in funding these twenty-four geographically diverse colleges was to stimulate the development of new initiatives for transfer students.

San Diego City College developed a comprehensive proposal to stimulate transfer which is described in the final report to the Ford Foundation available from San Diego City College, Office of Student Services. The proposals of all twenty-four funded colleges are compiled in a monograph available from the Ford Foundation, called New Initiatives for Community Colleges, edited by Networks.

Our primary objective was to accumulate data that would tell us more about the characteristics of our students and about the educational experiences those students had in our particular institutional environment.

The instrument selected for measuring student characteristics was the CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) American Freshman Survey by Alexander W.

Astin. Although primarily used by four-year institutions, it provided comprehensive measures of characteristics of our two-year transfer students that had not previously been available.

The instrument selected for evaluating the institutional experiences of our students was the College Student Experiences questionnaire by C. Robert Pace. It is also primarily used by four-year institutions and provides a measure of the institutional environment from the perspective of the student. The only section of the questionnaire that was not appropriate for our students was the series of questions on dormitories and resident life.

Results of the Freshman Survey

The CIRP freshman survey was administered to 178 students during the Spring 1984 semester. Of that number, 115 were transfer students and 107 valid questionnaires were processed.

The following characteristics were identified in this pilot study of San Diego City College students.

Although the median age for City College is usually reported to be 28 years, 60% of respondents were 24 years or younger. Fifteen percent were in the 25-29 years category and 24% were 30 years or older.

Of the 107 respondents, 35% were men, 65% were women.

Almost 70% of men were in the 24 years or younger age group, while 40% of women were 24 years or older. The average age of women respondents was older than male respondents.

Three questions on the survey address ethnicity or ethnic environments. The ethnicity of respondents was 45% white, 23% black, 19% Chicano, 9% Asian, and 4% other.

Fifty-five percent responded that the racial composition of their high school was either completely white (12%) or mostly white (43%). Twenty-four percent attended high schools that were mostly non-white (18%) or completely non-white (6%).

When asked about the racial composition of their neighborhoods, 51% responded that they lived in either completely white (19%) or mostly white (32%) neighborhoods. Thirty-three percent responded that they lived in mostly non-white (23%) or completely non-white (11%) neighborhoods.

Of national significance, this year a majority of the 254,317 total respondents supported bussing as a means of achieving school integration (50.7%) compared to 46.9% in 1982 and 43.3% in 1971. Fifty-three percent of San Diego City College students supported bussing. According to Alexander W. Astin, director of the survey since its inception in 1966, "The steady increase in student support for school bussing may mean that the more personal experience students have with bussing, the more they support it." (2:2)

The academic preparation of the San Diego City College

respondents was below the national average. Nationally 20.4% of students reported their high school grades as A or A-. Eleven percent of the San Diego City College respondents were in the same category. Twenty-one percent of the national cohort reported a high school average of C, 30% of San Diego City College students were C average high school students.

San Diego City College has no on-campus residence facilities. It is a commuter college and primarily serves the communities that are adjacent to it. Sixty-three percent of SDCC respondents live ten miles or less from the college. Forty-three percent live with their parents or relatives, 46% live in an apartment or other private home. The economic status of SDCC respondents to the survey would indicate that college choice was primarily dependent on its low cost. The survey was given during the last tuition free semester, spring 1984. Fifty percent of respondents estimated the income of their parents at \$15,000 or less and 20% estimated \$8,000 or less per year. Twenty-four percent estimated parental earnings between \$15,000 - \$30,000 with the majority of this group falling within the \$20,000 - \$25,000 income range (12.6%).

Although 43% of respondents lived with their parents or relatives, only 20.6% received assistance worth \$500 or more from their parents. Seventeen percent of respondents were

married and living with their spouses but only 9.4% reported receiving financial assistance of \$600 or more per year from their spouses.

A source of considerable financial aid for San Diego City College students was the Pell Grant. Forty-one percent of respondents indicated financial assistance from a Pell Grant. Sixteen percent received up to \$500 - \$1000 per year, and 6.5% received between \$1000 - \$2000 per year.

Forty-eight percent of respondents supplemented their educational expenses by working. Thirty-eight percent worked part time, ten percent worked full time. When asked to indicate their degree of concern about financing college, 38% indicated it was a major concern, 50% indicated some concern.

The student profile which emerges of the pilot cohort of the SDCC student is a woman over 24 years old who is either Black or Mexican -American. She was a B- student in high school and lives in an apartment in a predominantly white neighborhood, less than ten miles from the college. Her annual income is low by almost any standard and she is concerned about financing college. She receives a Pell grant and works part time. She plans to continue her education and pursue a BA degree in business or data processing. She is most interested in college attendance so that she can get a better job and make more money.

Results of the College Student Experiences Survey

The second research component included in the UCCTOP grant was the College Student Experiences Survey by C. Robert Pace. The goal of the survey was to measure the impact of the institutional environment on various aspects of student educational experiences while attending San Diego City College.

The Pace questionnaire is designed to measure the quality of college student experiences. It was developed to provide new measures to evaluate higher education; measures that more closely examine student learning and development. The two concepts that reflect these measures are quality of experience and quality of effort. These concepts evolved from the basic fact that all learning and development require an investment of time and effort by the student. The student plays a major role in determining personal outcomes because the student is personally accountable for the investment of his time and effort.

According to Pace, the underlying quality concept of the quality of effort measures was that of capitalizing on the potential for learning and development inherent in the nature of the particular category of experience. (3:9) It is a way to measure the quality of the process as well as the quality of the product. (3:5)

The survey is designed to be given to students who have

ideally had at least a one year experience in college. The survey questions address the quality of experience by estimating the educational gains accomplished.

This assessment approach is also called value added. Value added refers to qualities or values that the individual gains as a result of the college experience. These values are all things that did not exist before and have been added to one's life. For example: courses taken, papers written, exams completed, concerts attended or athletic endeavors. Value added reflects the quality of the college experience; quality of effort determines the dimension of the value added.

The catagories of most interest to SDCC were the student's estimate of gains and student evaluation of the college environment.

The estimate of gains section on the survey required students to rate their personal gains on a four point scale: very much, quite a bit, some, very little. The following are estimate of gains results.

Estimate of Gains

The gains of SDCC students were strongest in: vocational training; information relevant to a career; writing clearly and effectively; understanding yourself; abliity to get along with other people and abliilty to learn on your own; pursue ideas and find information you need.

Areas where some or very little gains were made included: understanding and enjoyment of art, music and drama; acquaintance and enjoyment of literature; familiarity with the use of computers; understanding the nature of science of experimentation; understanding new science and technical developments; awareness of the consequences of new applications in science and technology.

These results, although representative of a small pilot cohort of students indicate strengths in vocational education and general education especially improved writing skills. The gains made in understanding yourself and others is certainly a value added dimension that enhances the quality of experience and the quality of life.

The weak gains in science and technology and computer knowledge may not be representative of the total student population at SDCC. Data processing (information systems) is a very popular major at SDCC and administering the survey to a larger segment of the student population would possibly show increased gains in this area.

Assessment of the college environment was determined by eight categories on the survey. Students were asked to evaluate various components of the college environment on a scale of 1 to 7. A score of 7 indicated the strongest emphasis, a score of 1 the weakest emphasis.

The following are the mean scores for the SDCC college

environment.

ENVIRONMENT RATING	MEAN SCORE
Academics, scholarly	4.9 (7=strong;1=weak)
Esthetic, creative	4.7 (7=strong;1=weak)
Critical, evaluative	4.5 (7=strong;1=weak)
Vocational	5.2 (7=strong;1=weak)
Personal relevance	5.1 (7=strong;1=weak)
Students	5.2 (7=friendly; 1=uninvolved)
Faculty	5.8 (7=helpful; 1=remote)
Administrators	4.2 (7=considerate; 1=rigid)

Conducting research on community college students is not a very high priority in most community college districts. Districts faced with declining budgets are even less interested in funding research and there are some costs involved in meaningful research.

There are several advantages of using established survey instruments as we did at SDCC with the UCCTOP grant. The instruments have been tested and are reliable and valid. There is a monumental amount of longitudinal data available for the freshman survey (17 years), but also for the college student experiences survey. Processing the surveys and getting the results is greatly simplified because the scoring and results are compiled by an independent company, Intran.

For San Diego City College, the next step is to increase

the size of the cohort. A larger number of respondents would make the entire study more meaningful. Ideally, the study will be replicated by the other campuses of the San Diego Community College District. The diversity and size of the district make it a perfect environment to accumulate longitudinal data that could benefit not only the district but the entire state community college system.

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